

REMARKS

Claims 1 and 3-13 are pending in the application. The indication of allowance of Claims 1, 3, 4, and 10-13 is noted with appreciation. Claims 5-9 have been rejected. Claim 5 has been amended. Reconsideration and allowance of Claims 1 and 3-13 in view of the above amendments and following remarks is respectfully requested.

Entry of this amendment after final rejection is respectfully requested. Applicants believe that the amendment does not raise the issue of new matter, does not raise new issues requiring further consideration and/or search, and places the application in condition for allowance.

The Rejection of Claims 5-9 Under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a)

Claims 5-9 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 5,562,740, issued to Cook et al., in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,549,791, issued to Herron et al. Withdrawal of the rejection is requested for the following reasons.

Claims 6-9 depend from Claim 5.

Claim 5 has been amended to conform the method claim to the product claims indicated as allowable. In view of the amendment to Claim 5, applicants believe that Claims 5-9 are now allowable.

The cited references, either alone or in combination, fail to teach or suggest a method for making bleached polyacrylic acid crosslinked fibers in which a bleaching agent is sprayed into an air stream containing polyacrylic acid crosslinked fibers to provide polyacrylic acid crosslinked fibers in which the Whiteness Index of the treated fibers increases from a first value determined initially after treatment to a second value determined up to 14 days after treatment.

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Because the cited references fail to teach, suggest, provide any motivation to make, or otherwise render obvious the invention as now claimed, the claimed invention is nonobvious and patentable over the cited references. Withdrawal of the rejection is respectfully requested.

CONCLUSION

In view of the above amendments and foregoing remarks, applicants believe that Claims 1 and 3-13 are in condition for allowance. If any issues remain that may be expeditiously addressed in a telephone interview, the Examiner is encouraged to telephone applicants' attorney at 206.695.1755.

Respectfully submitted,

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